

War of 1812

Background

The 1783 Treaty of Paris ended the American Revolution. Britain agreed to the independence of the United States and to abandon its forts and withdraw its soldiers from the new nation. However, Britain still governed Canada. From 1793 to 1812, France and Britain waged almost constant war. During their conflicts, each side attempted to blockade the ports of the other. American merchant ships were often fired upon or captured by both sides. By 1812, France agreed to stop seizing American merchant ships, but Britain had not. On June 4, Congress considered a resolution to declare war on Britain.

Declare War on Britain By "Wilma Harrison"

The United States is being bullied. If we do not defend ourselves, no nation will ever take us seriously.

The British navy is seizing American ships. But, not only do they take private property, they also kidnap American sailors. This is because the British government forbids its sailors to become American citizens.

Consider the case of the American ship *Chesapeake*. While out at sea, it was fired on by the British warship *Leopard*. Three Americans were killed. The British then boarded our ship, identified four American sailors who they claimed had once been British citizens and dragged them away. They hanged one sailor for desertion.

After that outrageous incident, we tried to convince Britain to stop seizing our ships and sailors by refusing to trade with them. However, forbidding American merchants to trade with Britain just hurts our merchants!

We cannot allow Britain to execute Americans. We must defend our citizens. And, we must meet force with force or we will lose respect throughout the world.

The fact of the matter is. Britain is still angry we won our independence almost 30 years ago.

The peace treaty ending the Revolution was signed in 1783, but it took 12 years for the British to leave the forts they built on our side of Lakes Michigan and Erie. In 1794, the British Governor of Canada promised the American Indians that if they helped him re-conquer America, he would return to them any land they had given to the U.S. in past treaties.

From 1790 to 1795 the British gave guns to the Delaware, Wyandot, and Miami Indians and encouraged them to attack American settlements. When an American army was sent to restore peace, the Indians launched a surprise attack and slaughtered more than 600 soldiers in their sleep.

Ultimately, those Indians were defeated. But now Britain is again arming and inciting Indians to kill our settlers. They encouraged the Shawnee chief, Tecumseh, to travel throughout the western U.S. to organize the other Indian tribes. Tecumseh promises them British guns, ammunition and support. Last year, the Shawnee Indians attacked American settlements in Ohio and Kentucky. More acts of violence are sure to follow.

When the United States became an independent nation, we agreed to accept responsibility for protecting ourselves. It is now time we accepted that responsibility and declared war on Britain.

Negotiate with Britain

By "Rufus Duke"

War has serious consequences. Wars are expensive and deadly. The Revolutionary War put our government almost \$100 million in debt and cost the lives of approximately 10,000 Americans. Before we send our fathers, brothers and sons to die, we should review the facts objectively and make a decision based on logic, not emotion.

The first fact to consider is that blockades are common during war. The British Navy does not allow Russia or Sweden to trade with France either. But the governments of those nations are not discussing whether to declare war on Britain because of it. If we go to war with every country that enforces a blockade against its enemy, we will be at war all the time.

Another fact is that if we declare war against Britain, we will indirectly help France. And, France is ruled by Napoleon, a dictator who wants to conquer the world.

When Napoleon acquired the Louisiana Territory from Spain in 1802, Americans panicked. We recognized then that Napoleon is an aggressive, dangerous tyrant. Fortunately we bought Louisiana Territory from him and ended the French threat. Europeans have not been so fortunate. They have been Napoleon's victims for the past decade. Do we really want to choose Napoleon's side in this European war? A third

important fact is that we trade with Britain more than we trade with any other country. The British blockade of France costs us very little. But, declaring war on a country with whom our merchants carry on lots of trade will destroy our economy. When one considers all these facts, it actually makes more sense to declare war on France than Britain.

Some people complain that the British in Canada encourage Indians to attack American settlements. But our record in the west is full of examples of treaties we ignored and injustices we did to the Indians there. We should not blame Britain for our poor relationship with Indians.

We must also ask ourselves, what will happen if we lose? Think of the cost if our western border became the Ohio River, instead of the Mississippi, or if the British took control of New Orleans.

Finally, before going to war, we should make sure we allow enough time for negotiation. For example, refusing to trade with Britain will eventually force them to compromise. After all, it worked with France.

In his farewell address, President George Washington warned us against getting involved in European wars. He was right. We should stay out of this one.

Name _____ Date _____

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Worksheet**

- 1) According to Harrison, _____ American sailors were killed when the *Leopard* fired on the *Chesapeake* and _____ American sailors were kidnapped by the British.

- 2) According to Harrison, which Shawnee chief is traveling through the western U.S. encouraging Indians to attack American settlements? _____

- 3) According to Duke, how many Americans died during the Revolutionary War? _____

- 4) According to Duke, why would it be so bad if we indirectly helped France? _____

- 5) Compare and contrast the views of Harrison and Duke on the fact that American Indians have been attacking American settlers. _____

- 6) Which person do you agree with and what is their most persuasive example or statistic?

(Over please)

- 7) If Britain was willing to give in on one of the following issues, place a check beside the one that is most important to America and explain why it is the most important.

_____ Stop seizing American sailors who had once been British citizens

_____ Stop seizing American ships trying to trade with France

_____ Stop selling guns and ammunition to American Indians

Explain _____

- 8) Describe how the situation might be different if France had not sold the Louisiana Territory to the U.S. and still owned it in 1812? _____

- 9) When making decisions, is it more important to rely on logic or emotion? _____

Explain _____
